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WHICH IS THE CONQUEROR,  
GOD OR SATAN ?

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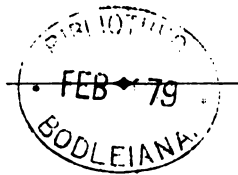


*Price One Shilling.*

**FOUR SERMONS**  
  
ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH  
  
**THE FUTURE STATE OF HAPPINESS  
AND PUNISHMENT.**

BY

**H. C. CALVERLEY, M.A.,**  
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## P R E F A C E.

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A FEW words are due, by way of apology, for this attempt to deal with a topic of so deep and difficult a nature as Eternal Punishment,\* especially as it has lately been a good deal written on by many far abler pens than mine. My apology is, that I wrote these sermons solely for my own people, without the slightest idea of ever printing them. In fact, they were not even intended to be a consecutive series : *i.e.*, they were not planned out beforehand : but one just grew out of the other, as fresh thoughts suggested themselves, or were suggested by the remarks of those who heard them. Finding that I had awakened an interest in the subject, I felt anxious that those who had heard my arguments, as well as others who had not, should have the opportunity of considering them at leisure, and as a whole : and the only way of affording this opportunity was by printing them. In revising for the press, I have omitted a few personal remarks, and have inserted several fresh references to texts, and also some additional matter by way of further explanation, which will be found for the most part in the foot-notes : but in form and substance, the sermons remain as they were preached. I have even thought it best to retain the colloquial style, because I wish them to appear in their original character of plain practical pulpit addresses : and to disclaim, by their crudeness and homeliness, any intention of challenging comparison with more learned and elaborate treatises. My own people (and it is for them that they are in the first place printed, as it was for them that they were written,) will, I think, prefer seeing them in their original state, as being more like an old friend : and

\* The first Sermon, though not directly dealing with this subject, may be considered, as in fact it was, introductory to it : and it contains some thoughts on the future of the body, which it is hoped may prove useful and comforting to some.



I trust that their want of polish may not altogether deter the general public from looking to see what is inside them. Indeed, I am not without hope that their very simplicity, and perhaps I may also add their cheapness, may help to introduce them to the notice of a very large and important class of readers ; viz., those who would never have, or never avail themselves of, the opportunity of studying more learned and costly works. I can at any rate assure those who may chance to read these sermons, that they are not made up of other people's written thoughts "warmed up again." I consulted no book when I wrote them, except the Bible and Cruden's "Concordance." Not that I at all disdain the help of other minds. But it would not so well have suited my immediate purpose in the pulpit, nor indeed was it in my power to hunt up authorities on the subject. I had not even heard, till after the sermons were written, of Canon Farrar's *Eternal Hope*, which has lately created a considerable sensation, and has called forth many rejoinders and criticisms. I have since read it with much profit and pleasure, and also with much surprise at those who call it superficial, and who, I think, can hardly have given themselves time to read his notes and appendixes, or they could scarcely have brought such a charge against him. I have also read an excellent little book by the Rev. Samuel Cox, entitled *Salvator Mundi (The Saviour of the World)*, and several interesting Papers bearing on the same subject in the *Contemporary Review*. I venture, however, to think that there is still room for my very humble contribution to get in edge-ways, on account of its comparative insignificance. I am aware that many persons, even of those who are inclined to hold the views I advocate, have doubts about the expediency of preaching or publishing them : but I cannot share these doubts, for two reasons. First, because I think it can never be wrong for a minister to preach what

he conscientiously believes to be true, even though it may be at the risk of offending some. And (2) because those who hold (so-called) orthodox views on this and kindred subjects are, from the same conscientious motives, continually dwelling on them and appealing to them in their public utterances ; and if there *are* two sides to a question, it is surely better and fairer that both should be stated. To make violent and sneering assaults on old and deeply-rooted forms of religious belief, is as unwise as it is unjustifiable. But, on the other hand, an honest endeavour to throw new light on old forms of thought, and to apply the divine gift of reason, and the results of careful study and reflection, to *the reverent investigation and elucidation of God's written Word*, even though it should sometimes lead us to results and interpretations somewhat different from those which we have been accustomed to, is surely rather a plain duty which we owe to those who look up to us for guidance and instruction, than a ground for blame and suspicion. All other knowledge grows and ripens ; and every succeeding generation makes a step in advance of its fathers. Mechanics, medicine, chemistry, agriculture, astronomy, geology, all keep moving on, and occupying fresh ground year by year. We are not afraid or suspicious of this. We feel sure that this continual and progressive development of mental power and scientific knowledge comes from God, and we rejoice that it enables us to use more worthily, and to appreciate more fully, the bountiful treasures of Providence which are thus opened out before us. And shall growth in religious knowledge alone stand still, and refuse to advance ? Shall we think and reason deeply on every other subject, but not on that, the most important of all subjects ? If this is the case, then indeed I fail to see of what use a preacher is at all. If he is merely to keep saying over and over again what everybody knows already, if he is never to get out of one

groove, if he is forbidden to think for himself, or at any rate to give his hearers the benefit of his thoughts, then an *educated* ministry is certainly not needed. It is out of place. It is so much wasted power. All that is required, according to this hypothesis, for the proper conducting of divine service, is purely mechanical—some one to read the prayers without making blunders, and to preach the sermon without *thinking thoughts*, or making anybody else think. Is this what really meets the wishes and the needs of a religious and intelligent community? I cannot believe it. Of course every hearer or reader reserves to himself the precious and inalienable right of private judgment. Is not this a sufficient safeguard against his being unduly led away by unsound or unproved statements? He is not in any way committed or compromised by what he hears. Only let both parties be earnest and honest, and mutual benefit cannot fail to ensue. I am not assuming or recommending, God forbid, that the preacher should always be trying to produce novelties, or to say startling things. I am sure that there is plenty of what is old and good and true, to last him and his congregation for any number of years, if needs be. Only, if at any time he wishes to say something new, let him not feel debarred from saying it. Let him honestly declare what he believes to be God's message, and let the hearer hear, and honestly judge for himself. "We speak as unto wise men, judge ye what we say" (1 Cor. x. 15). We cannot all think *alike*, nor is it at all necessary that we should. But we can all help each other in trying to think *aright*, and in the pursuit of that knowledge which is "able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 15). If we do this, I am sure that God will give us his blessing, and will prosper the seed sown. But I am sure also that it cannot be thoroughly done if we stifle thought, and content ourselves with repeating

comfortable truisms, or thundering forth vague anathemas. No doubt this style pleases some, but does it edify or instruct them? Can it *instruct* you, to hear *nothing but what you knew before*? Does not this rather result, both to minister and people, in the sort of church-going described in the following homely fashion by our living poet Tennyson?—

“An’ I hallus comed to’s church afoor moy Sally wur deäd,  
An’ eerd un a bummin’ away like a buzzard-clock ower my yeäd :  
An’ I niver know’d whot a meänd, but I thowt a ’ad summut to saäy,  
An’ I thowt a said whot a owt to ’a said, an’ I comed awaäy.”

If this unedifying result, this being “sent empty away,” is partly the fault of the hearers, yet the preacher cannot, I fear, be wholly held free from blame. It would often be better, I venture to think, for us and for our people, and for the sacred cause which we are commissioned to plead, if we had more courage *both to think and to speak* of the things which God’s Spirit puts into our hearts, without fear or favour. And now let me, in all humility, and with an unfeigned sense of my own many imperfections and shortcomings, conclude these introductory remarks, and commend them to the serious and unprejudiced consideration of my readers, and especially of my clerical brethren, with this definition of a faithful teacher and expounder of God’s Word, taken from the lips of an unimpeachable authority. “Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things *NEW AND OLD*” (Matt. xiii. 52).

H. C. CALVERLEY.

BASSINGHAM RECTORY,  
near NEWARK,

August, 1878.

*ERRATUM.*

Page 33, line 8—For “if I may so,” read “if I may say so.”

## C O N T E N T S .

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# SERMON I.

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THE DIVINE NATURE AND DESTINY OF THE HUMAN BODY.

*PREACHED ON SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY, 1878.*

*Lessons for the Day*—GENESIS I. and II., and REVELATION XXI. and XXII.

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GENESIS I. 27.—“God So created man in His own image.”

I HAVE often regretted the names that have been affixed in the Prayer Book to these three Sundays before Lent. They are not only hard and barbarous, but they are absolutely meaningless. I venture therefore to call them by three other names, which are at least easy to be understood, and which also suggest a connection with the remarkable series of events described in the Old Testament lessons for the three several Sundays. These names are Creation Sunday, Punishment Sunday, and Covenant Sunday.\* This

\* The Prayer Book names for the three Sundays are Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima, which are simply three Latin words, signifying 70th, 60th, and 50th. Seventieth, sixtieth, and fiftieth what? What is the real or supposed connection between the names and the days? All that can be alleged is that Quinquagesima Sunday does happen to fall on the 50th day before Easter. But of what possible interest or importance is this numerical fact? It is not needed to fix its place in the series of Sundays, for that is indicated by the supplementary title which follows, viz., “the next Sunday before Lent.” And whether that happens to be 49, 50, 51, or any other number of days before Easter, can be of no possible consequence whatever. But the connection between the other Sundays and their names is still more vague and unsubstantial. It is simply this: that as the last of the three Sundays is styled the 50th day, the other two are called the 60th and 70th, *i.e.*, presumably the 60th and 70th days before Easter, although actually they are not the 60th and 70th days at all, but the 57th and 64th. I think therefore I am justified in asserting that the



is of course Creation Sunday, and it seems to come with a peculiar fitness at this season, when we are anxiously watching the first dawn of the new creation of the plants and herbs and leaves after their winter's sleep, and are, I hope, praising God for his mercies, who "maketh all things new," and "giveth us all things richly to enjoy," and "the kindly fruits of the earth in due season."

"Soon the sleeping earth shall wake,  
And the flowers shall burst in bloom,  
And all nature rising break  
Glorious from her wintry tomb."

We have also a wonderful glimpse given us in to-day's New Testament lessons, of that awe-ful future life which is to be called into final and glorified existence at the resurrection, when there shall be "a new heaven and a new earth," and when all the sleeping atoms of humanity shall be as it were created again, and burst forth in all the beauty and freshness of an everlasting Spring.

In attempting to say anything on such wonders as these, whether of the past or future, I feel a very humbling sense of my own utter inability to do justice to such a subject. And I only pray God that what I do say may not be wholly without profit, and that it may help our full hearts to realize and understand some of the blessedness both of the old and the new creation, the past and the future, the life here and the life which is to come.

three names alluded to are both "barbarous," as being in a foreign language, and "meaningless," as being devoid of any real practical meaning or value. The three alternate names which I have ventured to suggest exactly indicate and correspond with the great subjects of the Old Testament lessons for each Sunday. Thus on the 1st Sunday we have (morning and evening) the double account of the Creation; on the 2nd we have (morning and evening) the two-fold punishment (*a*) of the expulsion from Eden, and (*b*) of the Flood; and on the 3rd we have (morning and evening) the two Covenants which God made (*a*) with Noah, and (*b*) with Abram.

And first let me call your attention to the accounts of the creation in the 1st and 2nd chapters of Genesis—I say “accounts,” because they are evidently two separate and distinct accounts, the first beginning Gen. i. 1, and going down to ii. 3, and the second beginning ii. 4, and going on to the end of the chapter. They are not one continuous narrative, neither are they two wholly different ones. For the second account begins again at the beginning, and travels partly over the same ground as the first. And this I think is worth noticing, as being a good specimen of the way in which accounts of Scriptural events are often repeated in different parts of the Holy Book (notably in the accounts in the Gospels), and it shews us how this is a real gain, and not a mere addition of superfluous or contradictory matter. For the separate accounts or versions, though often varying a good deal, will, I think, always be found to be in harmony in the main facts. One brings out some special point which the other passed over, and so each confirms and supplements the other, and the whole subject is thus more completely presented to us, and often from different and equally interesting points of view. So here for example the first account of the creation maps it out in all its separate parts and stages, while the second account sums up all this in a very few words, and then proceeds to enlarge on its main subject, the creation of man, and his establishment in his new earthly kingdom.”\*

\* These differences, and even discrepancies, are, as has been often pointed out, marks of genuineness, and not of carelessness, in the composition of the sacred volume. The direction, the inspiration, came from God, but it is evident that the writers were left in a great measure free to use their own language, and to rely on their own memories, as well as on the reports of others, for the facts which they related. This view alone and at once explains the remarkable differences in the *style* of the sacred writers (as in the case even of the four evange-

Let me also call your attention to the word "day" as it is used in the account of the creation. It is a curious instance of the way in which words sometimes mislead us, just because we choose to attach certain meanings to them which they are not meant to bear, and then, not being able to reconcile (for instance) the visible evidences of God's works with *our* interpretation of his word, we are apt to conclude that, as the phrase is, science (*i.e.*, knowledge) and the Bible cannot agree, and that we must either give up one or the other, and so we are in danger of splitting up into two parties, and while men of science call those who hold by the Bible fanatics, believers in the Bible call the men of science infidels. Happily, my friends, this is not the only alternative. There is a third path open to us, and that is to believe that God must always be utterly true, and must be leading us to the truth, by whatever voice he speaks to us, by whatever revelation he shews us his fatherhood. To believe that his word is one voice, his works another voice, and the reason with which he has endowed us a third voice : and that if by the guidance of this third voice of reason we study deeply, fearlessly, and trustingly, the two voices of his works and his word, we shall find

lists), and also the frequent variations in the minor details of the same events. It is of course incompatible with the "literal" or "verbal inspiration" theory, but so is the whole of the Bible itself. It is quite compatible with the fullest and firmest acceptance of the Scriptures as the revealed word of God, "able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. iii. 15), "given by inspiration of God" (v. 16), according as "holy men were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21). And with regard to the two accounts of the creation, there is nothing which precludes us from supposing that they were originally the work of two different writers, both composed under the guidance of God's Spirit, and afterwards selected, under the same divine guidance, by Moses as the compiler of the Pentateuch, and preserved in the sacred volume.

that the more we know them and understand them, the more they will be seen to agree and not to disagree, to throw mutually fresh light on each other, to fill up and illustrate each other, and so to lead us ever onwards and upwards, taking us by the hand like little children, through all the wonderful, mysterious, and blessed paths of providence and grace.

And now to go back for a moment to the word "day" as applied to the creation. We attach to the word for convenience sake a certain limited meaning, *i.e.*, a period of twenty-four hours. But the word really means simply a measure of time, it may be long or it may be short. We are not told that the days of creation were days of twenty-four hours. All we are told is that the whole of the work of creation was accomplished in six periods of time which are called days. You need not look further than the 2nd chapter (v. 4) to see the word "day" used as a still larger measure of time. For it is used there to signify the *whole* period of creation ("in the DAY that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens"), *i.e.*, the same period which in the 6th chapter was called *six days*. And when we read in the 95th Psalm "to day harden not your hearts," what does that mean? And when we speak of the "day of salvation," "repent while it is called to-day," or when we sing in the beautiful words of the old hymn, "Sweet Saviour, bless us e'er we go, through life's long day and death's dark night," what do we mean? We do not mean in any of these cases days of twenty-four hours: we mean the whole of our life, or the whole of our day of salvation, *i.e.*, of the existence of this world. In fact we mean just any period of time which fits in with the subject. And with regard to the creation, remember it is not a question of what God might or could have done, but of what he did do.

We have the most complete proofs that the earth on which we live took not hours, nor years, nor thousands of years, but millions upon millions of years to make : it is impossible to doubt this, unless we refuse to accept the evidence of reason founded upon observation of facts, these facts being God's own works which lie before us. And if we accept this evidence of God's works, feeling sure that it is true evidence, does it not redound very much first of all to the glory of God, who planned and carried out such a wonderful work, a work that should take millions of years to complete ? What indeed are millions of years to him ? verily they are but a day ! And secondly, does it not redound to our own great comfort and joy and hope ? For what and for whom was this mighty work planned and prepared in the councils of heaven ? for what use and for what occupant was this giant fabric growing ready through the infinite ages of the past ? It was for man. For man, the best and noblest work, the crown of the whole creation, the shapeless, formless mass took shape and form, and brought forth in due order, one after another, the countless varieties of vegetable and animal life, from the lowest to the highest, until at last the home was ready, and then the occupier, the owner, was made ready for it.

I said that man was the noblest part of God's creation. Is this silly pride and presumption ? Are we justified in asserting this ? We are justified, and our justification lies in this sentence, "God created man in his own image." He must be first and best, of whom, and whom alone that could be said. And it is said more than once (see Gen. v. 1, ix. 6 ; 1 Cor. xi. 7). And what does the phrase mean ? It must mean that in some sense, some way, some degree, man is made

like God. Not only made by him, but actually bearing the stamp, the impression, of the divine likeness. Now this likeness evidently cannot consist in the outward form, because we are taught that God has no outward form. It must be therefore in qualities of mind, and in attributes of personal and moral character. And see what a wonderful thought is here opened out to us. For this fact, that we are made like God, not only shows us the high nobility and origin of our human nature, but it also in a wonderful way helps us to approach towards a faint, dim, yet, as far as it goes, a true perception and understanding of God himself. For it tells us that all that is best in us is an image of what is in God. Yea, that our best, highest, purest qualities, feelings, affections, are those of God himself.

And now, my friends, let us take a step further. I said that the body could not be in God's image as to form and substance. But yet the body is part of what God made in his image, and therefore in some way or other it must and does reflect that image. And this is a truth which we do not I think sufficiently realize. We are apt to draw too hard a line between the soul and body, as if they were independent of each other, in the same way as the kernel is of the shell, in it but not of it. And then we go on to talk of the body as if it was a burden, a clog, to the soul or spirit, as if it was the bad part of us, as opposed to the soul which is the good part of us. We almost apologize for having it, for having anything to do with it, and we look forward to the day when the spirit shall be rid of the encumbrance of the body, and shall in consequence be free and happy. Now there seems to be here rather a misconception of the true mutual relation of body and spirit. We know that as far as this life is concerned they are so closely blended and bound together, that it

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is impossible to separate them. They are fused together, they are one. Neither is complete, nor indeed can exist, without the other. Man, as God designed and created him, is and must be made up of body, soul and spirit altogether. There may be other created beings (as for instance the angels) who have no bodies. But even that we don't know; we can only conjecture. But we do know that man is a being whose body is an essential part and parcel of him: wrapt up with the soul or mind, acting always in concert with it, being a sharer, or rather an expression, of its inward feelings and promptings. It may be put, no doubt, to unworthy uses, and often is: but so may the soul. And in fact it is only when the soul is so degraded, that the body becomes degraded too. God made it to be the outward expression, human yet divine, of the inward spirit; and therefore all its feelings and affections and uses and actions, so far as they are not sinful, *i.e.*, a departure from the divine image, must be God-given and God-like, *i.e.*, like the image. Not a thing to be despised, but to be used and honoured in the way in which God made it to be used, in doing its appointed work, and exercising the gifts and faculties which it is endowed with. And in doing so and treating it thus, we are offering it to God as our "reasonable service," and are glorifying him in it and by it. It is true that St. Paul calls it a "vile body," but not in our sense of the word—another instance of misunderstanding words—"vile body" in this passage (Phil. iii. 21) means "the body of our humility or humble state," because our present state is of course a humble and imperfect one, subject to decay, and at last to death. But in this sense the *soul* is "vile" also, just as much as the body, and equally needs renewing. And observe that St. Paul does not go on to say that this body is therefore to be destroyed

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or got rid of—no—but it is to be “changed.” Changed into a more perfect state and condition, but still remaining the same body. “Changed” he says “into the likeness,” the image, “of Christ’s glorious body.” Yes, changed, but not destroyed, except temporarily or apparently by death. And again (2 Cor. v. 1—4.) he says we shall be “not unclothed, but clothed upon,” added to, re-furnished, re-covered, with a new and glorious heavenly covering. And this thought is carried out still further in the 15th chapter of I. Cor., where the apostle contrasts the natural body with the spiritual (v. 44) and the earthly with the heavenly (v. 48, 49), but still it must be the *same* body, as far as identity goes, because it is the body of the same man—not another body, but the same, only spiritualized, transfigured, glorified. The same “bare grain” that was buried in the ground, first decaying and dissolving, then reviving and reappearing, and bearing fruit a hundred-fold. Surely the very fact that God made man, the whole man, body and soul, in his image, is of itself a sufficient and independent argument, if there were no other, for the resurrection of the body, *i.e.*, for its being intended to inhabit heaven as a real body, re-united and welded together again with the soul, just as it was on earth. Because, if this were not so, the man, when he inhabited heaven, would not be the *same* man, and would not be a *complete* man. I know it is said “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (I. Cor. xv. 50), but we know very well that this does not mean the material substance of the body, but the carnal, gross, sinful part of our humanity (Rom. viii. 1—9). And this grossness and sinfulness of our nature applies to the spirit as much as, and indeed more than, it does to the body. For all that is gross and evil, though it may be expressed



partly by our bodily action, really we know comes from the heart and soul of man (see Matt. xv. 19). And when all that bad part of our humanity is purged and done away, then, and not till then, the body as well as the spirit will be fitted to stand in the presence-chamber of God and the Lamb. Yes, it is true that nothing *sinful* can enter heaven, but it is nowhere said that nothing *material* can enter there. We must indeed be spiritual there, but so we may be here (in a lesser and imperfect degree): and I don't see why we may not be material as well as spiritual there. We certainly could not be ourselves, our real selves, our whole selves, unless our bodies were with us. We all believe and acknowledge this as an article of our faith. But do we know or consider what it means? We may observe that all the descriptions that are given us in the Bible of heaven and the heavenly life, vague and obscure though they are, certainly lead us to suppose, as far as the words go, that it will be a material heaven and a material life, and that it will be much more like the best and sweetest part of our earthly life than we perhaps generally think. Look for instance at that wonderful description in the New Testament lessons for to-day (Rev. xxi. and xxii.). We are told there that the old heaven (or firmament) and the old earth will be swept away, and that there will be not only a new heaven, but also A NEW EARTH. Where and what will that new heaven and new earth be? We know not. Perhaps in those countless millions of glorious heavenly bodies, those stars and suns which we can now only guess at and gaze at dimly and darkly. But wherever and whatever the new heaven and earth may be, it must be somewhere and something that has "a local habitation and a name." Do we say that it is impossible that these bodies of ours can ever be re-created,

re-put together again, after they have utterly disappeared and perished in the grave? I answer, "they do disappear, but they do not perish, for nothing can actually perish."\* And is man's re-creation more impossible than his first creation? We accept *this*, we make no difficulty about it at all. We say "Yes, of course I know that man must be born and must die. It is the law of his nature." But how do we know? Why are we so wise about this? Only because it is a fact which is constantly happening. That is all that a law of nature really means. If the re-collection and re-creation of our bodily atoms were to happen now regularly within our own experience and observation, we should say directly that *that* was a "law of nature," and should accept it accordingly as an indisputable fact. Is a thing more impossible or more difficult or more unlikely for God to do, BECAUSE WE HAVE NEVER YET SEEN IT DONE?

Take now another argument for the future existence of the material body. It is one of our fondest and most cherished beliefs, that in heaven we shall associate again with those whom we loved on earth. I ask, could we really and fully do so, if only their spirits and not their bodies were there? Would that sort of intercourse and fellowship satisfy us now? Do we not love the bodies as well as the spirits of our dear ones? Is not the voice, the look, the presence, the expression,

\* It may be taken as a certain scientific fact, that matter is indestructible, *i.e.*, that nothing which has once been made can cease to be. It must go on existing under some conditions or other. It may be invisible and impalpable to our senses, but it cannot be really and absolutely stamped out of existence. And so neither the buried grain of wheat, nor the human body of which it is the emblem, can absolutely perish, in the sense of not being. "Dust to dust"—yes, but not "nothing to nothing." In all substances, vegetable, animal, or mineral, the waste of the old is the life of the new. That which is given off from one existence goes into another, and so nothing dies, or is created in vain.

the touch, that which completes and half constitutes the sacred sweetness of the closest earthly communion? Just as when we love particular places, it is the outward visible tangible spot, and not only the air and the climate and the mental associations, which we love. Well, we do not separate body and spirit here in our mutual companionship. Shall we, can we, hereafter? Would not such a renewal of fellowship be a very incomplete and unsatisfying one? Shall we not crave for, and therefore shall we not find, the form as well as the spirit of our loved ones?

One difficulty no doubt meets us here, viz., whether each body will be re-created at the same stage of life in which it left this world. Whether infants and old men will in heaven be infants and old men still. But this is a detail which we may well leave in the hands of the almighty, all-wise, and all-loving Creator. We are sure of this, that every one will be in a complete and perfect state of being, free from all trace of decay, and blooming with unfading freshness. Is not this enough?

The final argument for the resurrection and reproduction of the same earthly body remains to be stated. All that I have already advanced by way of argument is based on the fact of man's first creation in God's image. But there is another argument which is distinct in itself, and sufficient by itself, and which at the same time follows, or rather is part of, is contained in, the argument from creation. I mean the fact of Christ's resurrection. I say this is really contained in the fact of the creation in God's image: for both were parts of one whole grand scheme. Why did our blessed Lord and Saviour come on earth at all? He came to help us and lead us up to heaven. He came to fit and prepare us for the fulfilment and consummation of all

God's designs and purposes, and of all our own instinctive and intense longings. And that he might so lead and guide us, and assure us of the fulfilment of these hopes and beliefs, he took our human body, our flesh and bones, he put on that part also of the divine image, that so he might be a complete man. And thus, by his so living and dying and rising again and ascending into heaven, he has not only completed the work of salvation, but he has lifted the veil, in part at least, of the mysterious future, and shown us that it is possible, and therefore certain, that through the grave and gate of death we, as he did, shall rise one day, and ascend to where he is. Before he died on the cross, *his* body too, was a "vile body," *i.e.*, a body of humiliation (see Isaiah lii. 14; liii. 2, 3; Philipp. ii. 7, 8). But directly he rose—rose with the *same old* body (see John xx. 27; Luke xxiv. 39), it was glorified and endowed with fresh undreamt of powers (see Philipp. ii. 9; Heb. i. 3, ii. 9, 10; also comp. Matt. xvii. 2, and Rev. i. 13—16), and *with that* he ascended into heaven, taking it there with him, to lead and point the way and the place that was marked out for us. And observe that his risen body, though changed and glorified, so that "death could have no more dominion over him" (Rom. vi. 9), was still a real human material body, a body of flesh and bones, that could walk and eat and be recognized and be touched. Is not all this written, was not all this done, for our instruction? Is it not a picture, a foreshadowing, a revealing, of what shall happen to *our* bodies? Oh! my friends, let us believe this with all our hearts, nothing doubting! We long to believe it, and I say that we dare to believe it, because God has revealed it to us, both by telling us that we were made in his own image, and by sending his dear Son to give us actual, visible, tangible assurance of it, in the rising

and ascending of his own human body. And let this precious belief, while it assures and comforts and strengthens us in our earthly life, constrain us to employ all our wonderful God-given powers and faculties and affections, all our body, soul, and spirit, to his honour and glory, and our own mutual edification and well-being, which is indeed his honour and glory (see Rom. xii. 1, 2, 11 ; I Cor. vi. 20). Let us be loving, pure, upright, unselfish, earnest. Let us use and not abuse our divine humanity. Let us learn of Christ as well as trust in him, and honestly and humbly endeavour in our daily life to copy the sinless pattern. So shall we become more and more conformed to the divine image, and shall grow nearer and nearer to the stature and measure of the perfect man, and shall be ever preparing and training and ripening, through God's blessing and Christ's love and the Holy Spirit's guidance, for the everlasting inheritance of the saints in light.

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## SERMON II.

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FUTURE PUNISHMENT NOT ETERNAL.

PREACHED ON QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY, 1878.

*First Lessons for the Day*—GENESIS IX. to v. 20, and XII.

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I. JOHN IV. 16.—“God is love.”

THE Old Testament lesson for this morning brings before us the fourth of those very remarkable events which represent all that is known of the world's history for 1500 years. (1) There is the creation of the world, crowned by the creation of man in God's image. (2) The sad story of the coming in of sin into the world, marring and soiling the noblest work of God's creation. (3) The terrible punishment of sin by the flood.

“’Twas but one little drop of sin  
We saw this morning enter in,  
And lo ! at eventide the world is drowned !”

And then (4) there is the beautiful story which was read this morning about that covenant of pardon and peace which God made with Noah when he left the ark, and made through him with all the human race through all ages. And so, my friends, on this, as on so many other occasions, after the storm comes the blessed calm, and beyond the darkness of death shines forth the glorious light of everlasting life.

There is a reference to the flood in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel (*vv.* 38, 39), which is important and valuable for two reasons. First, because it sets the stamp of the highest authority, viz, that of our blessed Lord himself, on the tragical story of the flood. And (2) because in its concluding words it

carries the awful subject of sin and punishment still further on, into the unfathomed depths of the future, and so opens out a fresh train of thought as to the final and ultimate issues of sin and punishment.

That the second coming of Christ will be to many the beginning of a period of punishment seems to be distinctly intimated by our Lord in this discourse, which occupies the whole of the 24th and 25th chapters. And the special question to which I wish now to address myself is whether this future punishment of sin (alluded to in Revelation xx. 14, as the "second death") is or is not to last on for ever. And this question has a connection not only with the flood, but also with the creation, as well as with that covenant of peace which has been brought before us in the order of events to-day. Over each of them, yes, over the flood and the fall, as well as over the creation and the covenant, is written this inscription, "God is love." And I am unable to reconcile this fact, this truth, this statement of the very essence of God's nature, with the doctrine of eternal punishment, in the ordinary acceptation of the term.

First of all, take it in connection with the great fact that "God created man in his own image": and then think what we mean when we speak of everlasting punishment. We do not mean only that some of those immortal beings whom God created in his own image will be lost, annihilated. That would be sad and strange enough. But what we mean is something far far more terrible. It is that they will be punished in the most inconceivably dreadful way for ever. Aye, and worse than that. For it is not only a few, one here and there, the extraordinarily and hopelessly wicked, that will be so dealt with; but, mark this, it is the larger half of mankind; it is the many that will be

damned, the few that will be saved. Not one in a hundred, but two out of three. Now, my friends, if this were really so, would the creation of man be a blessing to the human race? Would'nt it be either a fearful cruelty on the part of the Creator, or else a sad and disastrous failure? And again, what would all the bright prospects of God's covenanted promises of mercy and peace be to us? Would they be really bright and comforting prospects? Would they not be rather a sad and hollow mockery to the greater part of us? And it doesn't seem to me to make it a bit better or more satisfying to our yearnings, our needs, our very sense of right, to say that it is our own fault if we are among the lost. Because the startling horrible fact still remains, according to this theory, that the greater part of mankind *are* lost, utterly and irretrievably lost. And therefore I say that, according to this doctrine, the creation of man would be a frightful misery, and it would have been better for the race, taking them as a whole, if they had never been born.

And now take another argument. We know that God not only created us in his own image, but when we fell into sin and folly, and wandered far away from him and his image, what did he do? What are we taught to believe? What *do* we believe and cling to, with the whole passionate force and longing of our being? We believe that God in his love devised a perfect scheme of salvation for us, by sending his beloved Son to take our nature upon him, so that he might lift it up, and us up, with him and with it, to heaven. God sent his Son to die, that men through him might live, and live for ever. There is, I know, one way of talking about this, which makes out God the Father to be a savage tyrant, who, for the sin of one man, condemned all the countless millions that



should come after him to everlasting torments; and that it was only because the Son, by offering himself as a victim, appeased the wrath of his Father, that he saved a portion, *only a portion*, of mankind from this horrible fate. But, my friends, surely this is not what the Bible really teaches. What says St. John in the chapter from which my text is taken? "*The Father sent the Son.*" What says our Lord himself in the 3rd chapter of St. John's Gospel? "*God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son.*" Yes, God is love, and Christ is love, for He and the Father are one. And acting as *one*, not as *two*, they first created man in their own image, and then, by the glorious scheme of the gospel as revealed through the humanity of Jesus Christ, they completed and crowned the grand plan of universal salvation; that plan by which the soiled and fallen nature of man, both body and soul, is to be restored to God's image, and sealed anew unto the day of final redemption.

What are we to say then, what are we to believe, Christian brethren? Shall we believe that God, in all the fulness of his love and wisdom and power, made all men, that Christ Jesus died for all men, and yet that the greater part of mankind, of those whom God made and for whom Christ died, are to perish everlastingly? If this is so, are we not forced to one of these two alternatives? Either that God made man, and Christ died for man, knowing all the time that, to the vast majority of mankind, the mighty plan of divine love would only end in unutterable torments; or else that there must be some other mighty power of evil, which not only opposes, but finally conquers, the power of good; and that while thousands are saved through God and Christ, tens of thousands are lost through the power of the devil. That is to say, in

plain terms, that the devil is the stronger of the two. Is this the be-all and end-all of the mighty scheme of creation and salvation? Life to the few, and death to the many? I say no, no, it cannot be so, for "God is love."

Take another argument. What is the true end and object of all punishments, both human and divine? Is it not two-fold? (1) the general welfare of the world at large, of the whole race, and 2ndly and mainly, the reformation of the offender? Why does the law punish those who break it? Is it only *for the sake of punishing*, of making them suffer? Why does a father punish his child? This brings us still closer to the fatherly relation between God and man. Is not it to make him better? to chastise him, not in anger, but in love, in order that he may be led to repentance, *i.e.*, to reformation? And is not this why God punishes us? not to wreak vengeance on us, not to destroy us, but to save us, "though it be so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 15)? But if the future punishment which shall be inflicted at the judgment-day on the wicked is to last for ever, is not the whole ground cut away from any possible chance of future reformation? It is then nothing but a punishment *for punishment's sake*, and a punishment too of such an infinitely horrible kind, that it must be, even in the case of the worst of the human race, far out of all proportion to the blackest sins which they could ever have committed, during the whole short space of an earthly life. Don't mistake me, my friends; don't think I am arguing that there will be no future punishment at all, or that we do not deserve that there should be. We are bound to believe that there must be some future punishment in store for the ungodly, both because it is declared over and over again in the Bible, and also because it is absolutely necessary, to

satisfy our instinct of justice, to right the balance between the evil and the good, and above all, to give a last chance, oh! surely to give a last chance of repentance and reformation, to those who have thrown away their chance in this life, and have despised the goodness of God and the love of Christ. Yes, punishment there surely will and must be, and therefore Christ's coming to judgment will be in that respect like the punishment of the flood. But shall this short space of earthly life be man's only chance? Must the sins of this life, if they are unrepented of at the moment of death, be punished by a never-ending eternity of unutterable torment? God forbid! God *has* forbidden it, by the very title by which he has revealed himself to us, for God is love. He willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live. And surely what he wills that he will also accomplish.

Now look at the question from quite another point of view. What is our fondest, our intensest hope and belief, as to part of the nature of that eternal life which is in store for us? Is it only of ourselves that we are thinking when we think of it? or rather, is not our own vision of happiness closely and inseparably bound up with the future happiness of others, and specially of those near and dear to us? Would our own joy be complete, if we knew that millions of our fellow creatures were suffering all the while, on, on through the infinite ages, the torments of hell? And what of our own loved ones? We hope, no doubt, that they, as well as ourselves, will indeed escape those torments, and be reckoned among the ranks of the redeemed. But we know full well that *if* only the *few* are saved, our own family and friends can hardly *all* be. Every human family, every little home-group,

must expect to have *some* of the many, *i.e.*, the lost, among its members. Think how deep is the sorrow of a fond parent over a bad child. But what is that sorrow to the bitter bitter hopeless endless anguish, which they must feel, and must carry about with them through all their heavenly life, if they think that the erring child is suffering horrible torments, and that he must suffer them for ever? Would not heaven itself be turned for them into a very hell of inconsolable misery? If any end, however distant, could be seen or hoped for—if, after thousands and thousands of years of punishment, the lost ones could *ever* be brought home, and join at last the happy company of the saints, and the sweet fellowship of their loved ones, then it *could* be borne. Oh! will not, must not, this be so? I believe it will be so from the very bottom of my soul. I believe it, because my reason tells me it must be so, because God tells me it must be so, for God is love. And this is why I think that even such terrible judgments as the flood really do lead us to the same comforting conclusion. For what was the flood followed by? It was followed by the rainbow, the sweet messenger and token of final pardon and peace. And so, as far as it is a type at all, it is a type and an argument, not in favour of final destruction, but of final restoration and deliverance. Did not our blessed Lord, while his body was in the grave, go and preach in the spirit to the lost spirits in prison (1 Pet. iii. 19, 20)?\* And does not that point to the same merciful view? Did not Christ die *for all*? Shall his work, his mission, his pure and perfect

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\* These "spirits in prison" may, I think, fairly be taken as typifying or representing the *worst* of the human race (see Genesis vi. 1-13, and Matt. xxiv. 38, 39), and therefore as including, or standing for, all other wicked souls who have to suffer future punishment.

sacrifice of himself, fall to the ground ? Will his arm be shortened that it cannot reach all (Isaiah lix. 1) ? Will the late repentance of the souls in hell never win back for them through all the ages of eternity a message of pardoning love from the all-loving, all-embracing Saviour ? I say again, God forbid ! It cannot, cannot be, for God is love !

And now in conclusion I will endeavour to meet one or two of the difficulties which seem to stand in the way of this view of final universal salvation.\* It is alleged that if you were to remove from men's minds the belief in everlasting punishment, you would make them more careless and reckless than they are now, because you would take away the awful argument of terror which it inspires. I say in answer to this, does the belief in everlasting punishment succeed in hindering men now from leading wicked lives ? Clearly it does not. Therefore it does not answer its professed object and purpose. But I say further, that I believe the chief reason why it does not operate more effectually in keeping men from leading wicked lives, is because the doctrine of everlasting punishment is so monstrous, so horrible, that they do not really believe it ever can come true, and so they dare to run the risk. What is it that moves men to repentance, and draws them to God and Christ ? Answer for yourselves, my dear friends. And I think that you will say that it is not the fear of everlasting punishment that does it, but that it is a deep deep sense of the love of God and of Christ. If this does not move us and draw us to God, I don't think any threats of punishment will. They will only make us more hardened and desperate and reckless.

Then again it is alleged that the two doctrines of eternal punishment and eternal happiness must stand

\* These difficulties are further discussed in Sermon IV.

or fall together, because the same word "eternal" is used of both. People point to the texts where eternal punishment is spoken of, and say, with perfect sincerity, "I dare not disbelieve it, however dreadful it is, for there it is in the Bible, eternal punishment and eternal happiness, side by side." Now my friends, I believe in the Bible with all my heart, and in the truth of all those awful words. But as I have been saying to you lately, it is very possible, and very easy, to misinterpret, and therefore to misunderstand, the real significance of Bible words. It is true that words are intended to express thoughts and ideas, but it is also true that they cannot really and thoroughly do so, unless we thoroughly understand the thoughts and ideas to begin with. I mean, that what any word signifies to us, must be measured by our previous conception and understanding of the thing signified. It cannot go further than that. Take the word "God" for instance. Does that help us at all to understand the nature of God? No. We form our conceptions of what God is from various sources, from his word, his works, from our own inner feelings and instincts. And that divine being, whom we thus partly understand and wholly believe in, we call by the name "God." Now apply this to the words used to signify eternity. Can we understand, grasp, fathom, what eternity really is? No—it is quite beyond our limited mental powers to do so. We can only believe and wonder, and feel sure that it *will* be. But the point I am arguing for is that neither the word "eternity," nor any other word that we may choose to use, can fully express the *idea* of eternity, simply because our minds cannot fully grasp the idea. We cannot conceive what it is to have absolutely no end or limit, and therefore we cannot adequately express it in words. And, as a matter of fact, the words "eternal"

and "everlasting," which are used in the Bible to express the duration of the future state, are translations of Greek words which really mean nothing more than "lasting a long time," for an age, or a succession of ages. And that is all we can really measure—age going on after age indefinitely, but not infinitely. We may *believe* more than this, but we can't *understand* more. We may and do believe with all our hearts in the doctrine of everlasting happiness, *i.e.*, we believe that the happiness of the future state will never end. Yes: but why do we believe this? Not because of any particular word, but because our own hearts, guided by God's holy Spirit, assure us of it. But the word "everlasting" doesn't either prove or explain the doctrine; and just in the same way, and for the same reasons, the word "everlasting" doesn't prove that the future punishment of the wicked will last for ever, and therefore no such conclusion can fairly be founded upon it, or drawn from it. Our idea, our estimate, of what the duration will be, whether of future happiness or of future punishment, must be based upon other and surer grounds than the vague undefined force of the words "eternal" and "everlasting"; it must be formed and derived from what we know and feel, from all the sources of information and of inspiration within our reach, of the nature, the character, the unfailing love, and the unchanging will, of our heavenly and almighty Father.\*

\* It is probable that many constant and careful readers of the Bible are not aware, simply because their attention has never been directed to the fact, that in several passages where the words "eternal," "for ever," "everlasting," are used in our authorized version, it is simply impossible, and would be at once admitted to be so on all hands, that these words could have the meaning which is elsewhere sought to be assigned to them in connection with future punishment. Take for

instance Gen. xvii. 8, when the term "everlasting" is applied to the Jewish possession of Canaan. Or compare again Gen. xiii. 15, 2 Sam. vii. 16, Exodus xii. 14 (speaking of the passover), Num. x. 8, and Gen. xlix. 26 ("the everlasting hills"). One way in which this difficulty is met, this discrepancy reconciled and accounted for, may be seen in Cruden's Concordance, under the word "eternal." He admits the impossibility above noted, and explains that these words "are sometimes taken *for a long time*, and are not always to be understood strictly": and again, that they may mean *during our whole life*": and again, "in many other places of Scripture it signifies no more than during the standing of the Jewish commonwealth." Now surely this concedes the whole question at issue. For if these disputed words do not *always* or *necessarily* signify never-ending duration, then we have no right to assert or assume that in any given connection they must of necessity signify it. And so the whole fabric of this terrible doctrine collapses and falls to the ground, so far as it rests on the *necessary meaning* of these words: and if it does not rest on that, we may confidently ask, On what does it rest?

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## SERMON III.

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### ON THE USE AND NECESSITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

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I. COR. III. 15.—“He himself shall be saved: yet so as by fire.”

I SAID last Sunday that the true end and object of all punishment, when it is administered by a righteous and loving authority, even among men, is not revenge but reformation. And if this is the highest and truest principle of human punishment, it must also be the principle on which God punishes, seeing that he is the very essence of all that is best and highest and most noble and most loving. And it seems to me that this is of itself quite a sufficient argument against the (so-called) eternity of punishment. Because, according to that, there could be no possibility of reformation. There could only be a continued prolongation of unutterable torment; the door of hope would be fast barred; there could be no ray of light beyond the utter darkness; there could be nothing but unavailing remorse and endless despair. But if this is an argument against the eternity of future punishment, it is also an equally strong argument that there *will be* future punishment. For we are obliged to assume that vast numbers of people do pass out of this life in a state in which they could not possibly be fit to enter heaven. We hear sometimes of a death-bed repentance, and I am afraid that there is a great deal of mistake and delusion about that. I don't say it is not possible, but I believe it is very very rare, and that numbers of people simply deceive themselves about it, and

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encourage themselves and others in putting off repentance, because they say there is sure to be time enough before they die, that Jesus pardoned and accepted the penitent thief, and that as they are not at any rate worse than he was, there is no reason why they should not be pardoned too. A few cries for mercy, a few professions of penitence and faith when the death-sweat is on their brow, will make all straight, and will give them a free pass within the gates of Paradise, and into the arms of Jesus. Now, my friends, I for one do not believe this. I know that God is all-loving, and that Christ's atoning sacrifice *can* reach to all, and I believe it *will* reach to all. But I don't believe that a so-called repentance, just at the last gasp, wrung from some hard heart by the terrors of death and the fear of instant judgment, can put a man who has served the devil all his life, can put him, I say, *at once* on a level with the consistent Christian who has served God all his life, or at least for a great part of it. It seems to me that such a repentance as that is at best a very shabby, mean, paltry sort of affair. Trying, as it were, to drive as hard a bargain as you can with God, and to get all the promised blessings of the future at the least possible cost. And, as a rule, I don't believe myself that it is a real out-and-out thorough repentance. I don't see how it can be. It is only an inferior imitation, a cheap substitute for the real genuine article. There's no wear and tear about it. There can't be, because there's nothing to test it, nothing to try it, nothing to exercise it on. There's no time for that, no time for reformation ; and a reformed life is the only real evidence and proof of repentance. But even supposing such a repentance just at the last *was* real and genuine and thorough, and could stand the test, still that does not prove that the death-bed repenter is

put *at once*, by the great Judge of all, on the same footing as the life-long repenter. If it did prove this and do this, then a man might fairly say, "What is the use of beginning to repent so soon, while I am young or middle-aged? By and by will do. I shall be sure to have a warning. Nobody hardly dies quite suddenly, without time to say a prayer. I can please myself as long as I like, whatever my particular pleasure may be, and I can always repent and be religious whenever I like, or whenever my call comes. And at any rate I can make sure of it before I die. I know I am a guilty wretch, but Christ died for all, and the more I sin the more will his grace abound." I have no doubt that hundreds of such careless livers pin their faith on the story of the penitent thief; but surely that is a broken reed to lean upon. How much do we know either about his previous life, or about his life beyond the grave? First of all, for all that we know, he may have been a perfectly good-living man, who had walked with God the greater part of his life, and then had fallen into a course of dishonesty, or perhaps had only, in a fatal moment, been tempted to take one false step. And then again as to his future. It is true that Jesus told him he would be with him that day in paradise. But what is paradise? We can hardly be quite certain that it means anything more in this passage than the unseen place beyond the grave, where the souls of the departed rest. It was there we know that the soul of Jesus went, in order to fulfil all the conditions of humanity, and it was there he promised the dying thief that he should go too. But granting that it did refer to the resting-place of the blest, still that doesn't prove that it meant being carried *at once*, as Lazarus was, into Abram's bosom, supposing that to represent the highest place of

rest and reward. I can hardly perhaps take three better instances to illustrate my meaning, than Lazarus and the two thieves. Let us assume that all three will be saved finally : that Lazarus, having sought and found God in his life-time, went, so to speak, straight to heaven ; that the penitent thief went pardoned and accepted to the grave, but still had a period of purification to go through, and perhaps of punishment, before he was fit to enter the presence of God ; and that to the impenitent thief there must be a far longer period of probation, and a far severer punishment, beyond the grave, until at length to him also the blessed hour shall come, of penitence and pardon, of rest and peace.

And this leads me on to another thought, viz., that as there must be punishment in store for the wicked, so there must be different degrees of punishment, in proportion to their different degrees of wickedness. And we may well suppose that these different punishments, these different sentences, so to speak, will be different both as to their severity and as to their continuance. And not only our reason, our instinct, tells us that this must be so, but there are some expressions in the Bible which seem evidently to point to the same conclusion. As when our Lord told some great sinners that "it would be better for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for them" (Matt. x. 15). And again, when he told some others that "the publicans and harlots (*i.e.*, the lowest and vilest classes of society) would go into the kingdom of God *before* them" (Matt. xxi. 31) : *i.e.*, that *both* would ultimately get there, but that some would get there *after* others, because of the longer chastisement and purifying that they would require.\* Or again, when

\* No doubt the primary reference here is to the kingdom of God on earth : but I do not think that this hinders, but rather that it suggests, a secondary application to the kingdom of the future.

he said that, when he came to judgment, "some would be beaten with many, and some with few stripes" (Luke xii. 47, 48). And this notion of some requiring a longer term of punishment, and a severer chastisement, is not taking away one bit from the will or the power of Christ to save all at last. It only assumes that, through man's own folly and carelessness, the process of preparation, and the amount of punishment, will be longer and severer in some cases than in others. All will eventually be saved, and saved through Christ, but of "the times and the seasons" God alone knoweth. And this doctrine of different degrees of punishment is all the more probable and reasonable, because we are sure, from several hints which the Bible gives, that there will also be different degrees of happiness in heaven. For instance, our Lord says "some are to rule over ten cities, some over five, some over one" (Luke xix. 17, &c. ; Matt. xxv. 23, &c.) according to the use they have made of their spiritual advantages in this life. And again, "he that receiveth a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward ; and he that receiveth a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward" (Matt. x. 41). And then there is that striking passage in I. Cor. xv. 41, where St. Paul says that as "*one star differeth from another star in glory,*" even so it will be with us at the resurrection. And once more : "he that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly (*i.e.*, in the life to come), and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. ix. 6).\* It seems therefore probable, both from reason and revelation, that the soul, after it leaves the body, has to go (generally at least) through a further period of probation and

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\* Here again, as in Matt. xxi. 31, the primary application is probably to this life, but the secondary application of the phrase seems justified, and rendered highly probable, by Galatians vi. 7, 8.

preparation, and in many cases of punishment, before it reaches perfection. And if this is so, it would seem that this process must naturally be going on all through that mysterious interval of time that lies in front of every man, between death and the resurrection. To those who have loved and served God faithfully here, that waiting time will doubtless be one of sweet rest and peace, of an ever-deepening insight into spiritual things, and a constant growth in grace and holiness. To those on the other hand whose lives and deaths have been hard and cold and unlovely, who have wasted their time here, and abused the riches of a Father's goodness and a Saviour's love, to those the waiting-time will be one of severe chastening and discipline, of *utter* darkness it may be, but not surely of *endless* darkness. No ! for the blessed end of all this chastisement will be the ultimate and eternal salvation of every human soul : " he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire " (1 Cor. iii. 15).\* A little boy once said to his mother, after hearing how wicked the devil was, and what an awful punishment was in store for him ; " Mother, if the devil was to be very sorry, and be good, wouldn't God forgive him ? " My friends, sometimes little children are wiser than big ones, and see further into the hidden things of God. Sometimes God " hides things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes " (Matt. xi. 25). A very interesting thought grows out of this two-fold belief, (1) that many will be terribly punished hereafter, and (2) that all will finally be saved. The thought I mean is this. Whether it is wrong, and (if it isn't wrong) whether it is of any use, to pray to God in behalf of the dead. If the state of

\* That this passage has a reference to *future* reward and punishment, seems most probable from verses 8 and 13, compared with iv. 5, and Rom. ii. 6.

the wicked after death is not to be utterly hopeless, then it would seem as right and as natural and as useful to pray for them when they are dead, as it was while they were alive. And this would of course apply especially to all those whom we love. Family ties and yearnings are not destroyed by death, they are only disturbed. We still live and love our dear ones, and they still live and love us, on whichever side of Jordan they may be. That feeling of communion with the departed, that feeling that we are still one, is a most blessed and comforting one. "God is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Matt. xxii. 32). Yes, and therefore they still live, and still are God's. And shall we love them and yearn after them no longer, because they are gone out of our sight? Shall we take no further thought or care about them? or shall we only care about them if they are good? Shall we turn our backs upon them in hopeless indifference, if we have reason to fear, from their life and habits on earth, that they are in a state of punishment and not of happiness? Did we not love them and pray for them when they were alive and wandering far from God? Did we not pray then that they might repent and find God and Christ? And may we not do so as they lie after death, writhing in pain and shame? Shouldn't we feel even more intensely anxious about them, now that they are in an unknown land, than we did when they were by our side? Shouldn't we continually wrestle in prayer with God for them, our lost but still beloved ones? Should we not do this night and day, if we thought that we *might*, and thought that it *would be of any use*? And, my friends, I don't know any reason why it should be wrong to do so, or why it should be of no use. It is certainly nowhere forbidden, as far as I am aware, either in the Bible or in the

Prayer-book. Indeed, as far as the Prayer-book goes, it rather encourages us to do it; for at the end of the "prayer for the church militant" in the Communion Office, we are taught to pray that both we and those who have died in faith may be partakers together of God's heavenly kingdom.\* And if we may pray for those who have died in faith, may we not also pray for those who have died in sin? Do they not, if I may so, need our prayers much more? And then again, take that passage in the Burial Service, where we express a hope, which is something very like a prayer,† that he who is now buried may "rest in God:" *i.e.*, rest in God's mercy through Jesus Christ, *because it endures for ever*. Some of you have no doubt heard of the Romish doctrine of purgatory. Now there is a great deal of error, as we believe, in the doctrines of the Romish religion: but it doesn't therefore follow that all of it is wrong. A great deal of it is just the same as our own pure Protestant faith: only it is mixed up with a quantity of inventions and superstitions, which certainly don't come out of the Bible. And the doctrine of purgatory is just an instance of this. The original idea, or principle of it, is simply what I have just now been speaking of, *viz.*, that the souls of the departed, or at least of the wicked, suffer punishment for a time, in order that they may be purged and purified, and so may be finally pardoned, and restored to everlasting happiness. This—and also, that the prayers of those

\* The words in the Prayer-book are "we *with* those." But I think that the expression may fairly be taken as favourable, rather than opposed, to the view I am advocating, of *including* the dead in our prayers.

† It surely is a *prayer-ful* hope, *i.e.*, it breathes the spirit of prayer as well as of hope; standing as it does in the middle of a prayer, and seeming in its central thought to bind up all together, the living and the dead, in its pious commendation.



who are still alive will be a help and blessing to them. So far so good. But then upon this, which seems to me to be a most true and comforting view of the future, upon this I say, the Roman Catholics have grafted another notion which spoils it all, and makes it a scandal and a delusion, instead of a blessing and a reality. They tell the poor bereaved mourner, "Your father's, or your husband's, or your dear friend's soul, is in purgatory, *i.e.*, in punishment. He *can* be got out. God will hear prayer for him and answer it. But it isn't *your* prayer that he will hear, it is only the priest's prayer. It's not the least use your praying, no, not for your own beloved husband, or wife, or child, or father, or mother. The priest must do it all, and he can't do it unless you pay him for it. And the more you pay him, the quicker your dear friend's soul will be got out of purgatory, and the less you pay, the longer it will stay in." Now, my friends, you will agree with me that this is a shame and a scandal, and that there is no religion in it at all. We are sure that the eternal salvation of a soul is not to be bought by paying money to a sinful man, that there is no such go-between between God and man as that, and no such money-bargaining. But that doesn't prove that we may not pray *straight* to God in behalf of our lost ones, or that he will not hear us. Oh! surely he *will* hear such prayers, surely he *must*, he can't help doing so, from his very nature. Shall the widow cry to him for her departed husband, the mother for her lost child, the brother for the sister, the daughter for her father or for her lover, and shall they cry in vain? No, no, I cannot think so, because I know that God is love.

Hitherto we have been speaking of the *fact* of future punishment, but we haven't yet asked the question "of what sort is it to be?" How are we to understand

those strange and awful expressions which we meet with in Holy Scripture, about fire, and the burning lake, and the worm that never dies, and the torments of hell? We are quite certain that these words, being Bible words, contain the truth, and we are equally certain that they ca'n't be *literally* true. But can we form any idea as to what they do mean? As to what state or process is intended to be described by these very forcible figures of speech? Undoubtedly it must be a state of intense pain, and a process of very severe punishment. No one can doubt that pain and punishment are indicated in such passages as Mark ix. 43-48, Rev. xx. 15, xxi. 8. And when I say that the terms employed to represent such a state are clearly figurative and not literal, it is not because I think that the literal meaning would be too severe and shocking, but because it would be, in the first place, a wholly unnatural, if not an impossible method of punishment; and even supposing it were a possible one, it would be inappropriate and inadequate. It would certainly not be the most severe and terrible form of punishment. For no merely physical torture can be that: no amount of bodily pain can equal the intensity of such mental or spiritual pain as is inflicted by the stings of a guilty conscience, and of a soul haunted by self-condemning remorse.\* Besides, it is evident that no punishment *of the body* could at any rate take place during the period between death and the resurrection, because during that period the body is

\* Compare, in support of this argument, such passages as Isaiah lvii. 20, 21, Heb. xii. 10, and per contra, Isaiah xxvi. 3, Psalm cxviii. 6. See also Matt. x. 28, where our Lord distinguishes the punishment of the future, as inflicted by God, from the most severe of earthly or temporal punishments, as inflicted by men, by the fact that, in the first, the *soul* is punished as well as the body. The triumphant deaths of martyrs are also strong evidence of the insufficiency of bodily torture of itself to operate as a punishment, or as a *detering* pain.

assumed to be in the grave. It is, therefore, on this hypothesis, *only the soul* which, during that interval at least, can be accessible to pain or happiness, to punishment or reward.

We are then, I think, bound to assume that the punishments of the future, as indicated by the figures of burning and devouring, will be mental or spiritual, and not bodily or physical—that they will repeat, with a force in this life unknown, those awful agonies of sin remembered, perhaps even of sin still *felt*, which even now are capable of crushing the soul of man with overwhelming misery. And there will be another greater misery still, one which is in fact the summing up, the crowning misery of all. What is it that is to make heaven the happiest place we ever could be in, and the heavenly life the happiest life we could ever lead? I will answer this by asking, what is it which above all other things makes our earthly life happy? What is it that turns our darkness into light, and enables us to bear with fortitude the bitterest trials? What is that without which the happiest earthly lot is only a gilded misery, and health and wealth, and life and love, and time and talents, are only “vanity and vexation of spirit?”

My friends, the great secret, the infallible and only specific for happiness in this life, is having God with us and in us. “In his presence there is fulness of joy” (Psalm xvi. 11), and without it there is none. And in this way it is true that the heavenly life can, and actually does, begin here, by loving God and feeling him near us. Aye, and it grows more and more like heaven, *i.e.*, like the highest perfection of life, the more we love him, and the nearer we feel to him. Yes, and wherever and whatever heaven itself may be, that which

makes it heaven to us will be, not singing hymns all day and night, but feeling more closely, realizing more deeply, understanding more clearly, the true being of God ; drinking in ever more and more of the fulness of his love, and being more and more transformed into his glorious likeness. And this helps to shew us what the other side of the picture must be. If heaven and happiness mean being *with* God, hell and misery mean being *without* him. And this must be the worst of all miseries. For being without God means being, for the time, without hope—feeling lost, lost, lost—it means all the intolerable crushing weight of past, and as yet uncleansed sinfulness—it means self-condemnation, remorse, almost despair.

“Heaven is, dear Lord, where’er thou art,  
Oh ! never then from me depart !  
For to my soul ’tis hell to be  
Even for one moment without thee !”

But then, my friends, must not the very exceeding bitterness of this terrible prolonged period of misery wring at last, even from the hardest, sourest, wickedest soul that ever breathed, a cry of true repentance ? Must not a day come at last, though it may be in the far-off ages, when that stiff-necked sinner, that wandering and wayward prodigal, arises and cries to his Father, “Father, Saviour, blessed Guide and Comforter, I have sinned against thee ! I have despised thy goodness, thy love, thy long-suffering ! But now out of the very depths of hell I cry unto thee. Oh ! my Father which art in heaven, punish me as thou wilt : thou knowest all, and thou knowest best : only forgive me, forgive me for my Saviour’s sake ! Chastise me as long as thou seest good : humble me, crush me ! But oh ! at last, when the terrible punishment has done its merciful

and righteous work : then, show me once more the light of thy countenance, and I shall be whole !”\*

Oh ! my dear friends, fellow-sinners, fellow-believers, fellow-heirs of the eternal kingdom, let us cling for ourselves and for all others, cling, nothing doubting, to this precious, comforting, all-satisfying belief : the belief that all God’s chastisements, whether here or hereafter, are sent in love and mercy, and not in unpitying unrelenting wrath : and that the all-embracing scheme of gospel salvation through Jesus Christ will never be fully and wholly accomplished, until *all the human race* are saved, and pass, through it may be “so as by fire,” through sore agony and bitter discipline, into the everlasting mansions of the heavenly Jerusalem.

\* It is worthy of notice, as having a direct bearing on this aspect of the question, that the particular terms or figures, which are used by our Lord and others in the Bible to signify future punishment, point to an ultimate effect and result which is distinctly good and not bad. Fire is constantly recognised as a purifier (see Malachi iii. 2, 3 ; Psalm xii. 6 ; 1 Cor. iii. 15 ; Matt. iii. 11) ; and so even the loathsome worms which feed upon the decaying corpse are really purifiers, consuming all that is noxious, and leaving behind unconsumed, because unconsumable, those divine germs of life, which, though no longer visible and tangible, *must still be in existence* : must still be, even as the soul is, “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. iii. 3, compare 1 Cor. xv. 36.) Thus the figures of the worm and of the fires of hell, though they do no doubt indicate a state of terrible pain and punishment, yet also contain within them the blessed intention and assurance of ultimate purification, and of the restoration of the punished to life and happiness. Again, the remarkable expressions used by our Lord in the 9th chapter of St. Mark, about the *undying worm* and the *unquenchable fire*, appear to be quoted from Isaiah lxvi. 24. Now, referring to that passage, we find that those very expressions which are laid so much stress on, when used in the gospel, as implying infinity of duration, are really (just like the words “eternal” and “everlasting”) used in Isaiah for *very limited* periods of time. For the “unquenchable fire” in Isaiah lxvi. 24, could only have burnt the carcasses, and the “undying worm” have preyed on them, *until* they were consumed, *i.e.*, for a few days or years. Why then, when the identical phrase occurs in the New Testament, must the duration there indicated be assumed to be endless ?

## SERMON IV.

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### SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED, AS TO THE NON-ETERNITY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

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I. COR. xv. 57.—“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

OF COURSE there are no persons who would not gladly disbelieve, if they thought they were warranted in so doing, in the eternity of future punishment. It could not be any satisfaction, it could only cause the deepest pain to every loving heart, to think that even one of those souls for whom Christ died, could ever be condemned to such a horrible destiny. We are not wholly selfish at bottom : we are not even so selfish as to limit our good wishes to those who are near and dear to us. If we have any Christian charity, if we have indeed sat at the feet of our divine Master, and learnt of him, learnt anything of his all-embracing spirit of perfect love, then our most earnest desire must be that all the world should love him and learn of him too ; and that all, so learning of him and loving him, should be finally saved. But I can quite understand that many most pious and loving hearts, full of love to man as well as to God and to Christ, feel unable to get over those difficulties which seem to stand in the way of such a full and comforting belief. It is to such as these, and to such honest difficulties as these, that I desire with God's help to address myself to-night. I did refer to some of them at the end of my first sermon on the subject, a fortnight ago ; but there was not time then to enter fully into them. Of course I cannot pretend to know everyone's special difficulties : but there are some at any rate which I do know, and these I will now do my best to meet.

First, there is the question of WHAT WE DESERVE. It is alleged that we have no right to say there cannot be such a thing as eternal punishment, because we all *deserve* eternal punishment, because in fact every sin that we commit deserves it. Now, my friends, I entirely deny this, and I deny that the Bible says so. What is sin? It is bad enough anyhow; for it is disobedience against God. The sin may be greater or less; but this is the very essence of all sin, that it is disobeying God. Yes, and therefore it deserves punishment at God's hands. And it not only deserves it, but it gets it. By which I mean, that in some shape or other, at some time or other, a penalty follows every sin, little or big. And this I think holds equally good, although the sin itself may have been heartily repented of, and therefore, we are sure, freely forgiven. It is the inexorable working out of the moral law of our nature, that we cannot do wrong, without in some way and degree being the worse for it, *i.e.*, without paying a penalty for it. And we can see plainly on reflection, that this law of our nature is not only a just but also a loving law; because the punishment acts as a corrector and cleanser and purifier, and is in fact *part of the pardon*; of the pardon which either is already granted, or is to be. But this is a very different thing from saying that every sin deserves everlasting punishment. Think what you mean when you say this; and mark particularly the force of the word "deserves", for on it the whole argument really rests. Now the word "deserves" surely implies that there is a sort of just proportion, a sort of equality, between the offence and the punishment. That there should be this proportion, is, we know, one of the first principles of human law: and human law, so far as it is righteous law, must be based on the same principles of justice as divine law.

If there is any difference between the two, it is that divine law is not more severe, but more merciful, than human law, inasmuch as God is more merciful, and makes greater allowance for sinners, than man. Well then, according to all acknowledged principles of justice, little sins deserve little punishments, and great sins greater punishments. You don't class all sins as equal, and therefore you don't make all punishments equal. But if the smallest sin against God deserves the extreme of punishment, how are the greatest sins to be adequately punished? There must surely be different degrees of punishment for different degrees of sin. And therefore it seems to me on this ground impossible to hold that all sins deserve, either by the laws of God or man, the same extreme punishment.

But I go further than this. I say that even the greatest sins which a man can commit in the whole course of his life do not deserve everlasting punishment. For the most sinful life can only last some 70 or 80 years, and everlasting punishment, on the hypothesis, lasts for ever. Is there any proportion, any equality, between the two? Between the sins of a life and the sufferings of an eternity? Let us apply the principle to ourselves, our own cases: that is the fairest and simplest way of judging. We all of us continually commit sins of some sort, and sometimes they are not little, but great sins. Perhaps we repent of them, and perhaps we don't. Perhaps we can't make up our minds to do that: we are too fond of them to let them go: we keep them still, they are still in us. We know that we are acting very wrongly all the time, and that we deserve to be punished. But do we say, do we feel, do we admit, that we deserve therefore an eternity of punishment? As long as we still cling to our sins and do not repent of them, so long no doubt the punishment



must last. And therefore *if we never did repent of them* either in this life or the next, then I suppose the punishment would never cease. But do we mean to cling to them for ever? Or is it possible or conceivable that we should or could wilfully hold on, through the ages, and through the punishment, in a state of "no surrender", in a state of everlastingly defiant impenitence? And if not—if we ever do repent, *i.e.*, desire to repent, though it may not be till long after this day of trial is over—do we really believe that we shall still live on in torment for ever; *i.e.*, for infinite millions of years after we *have* repented? I think I may safely assert that we do not believe any such thing about *ourselves* at any rate. I mean, that we do not look forward to any such prospect or result as far as *we* are concerned. We may *believe that we believe it*. We may think that we hold the general principle, the doctrine, the theory, of everlasting punishment. But directly the theory is brought to bear either on our own case, or on that of any one in whom we take a real and deep interest, it breaks down. We refuse to apply it, or to contemplate it as an actual coming reality: *i.e.*, we virtually abandon it as untenable. And even when we do generalize and theorize about it; when we fall into the common phraseology, and speak of sin as deserving eternal punishment, we do so, I venture to say, at least in nine cases out of ten, without *thinking* about it, without attempting to face the question, or to consider calmly what is the true meaning of the words which we use. Now this *facing the question*, and considering it for ourselves, is what we must do, if we want really to get at the truth, and to "know it, so that it may make us free" (John viii. 32). We must try and *think for ourselves*, dispassionately and without prejudice, about the meaning of the awful words which

we use, and of the vital doctrines which we profess to hold, if we would offer to God a "*reasonable service*" (Rom. xiii. 1), and if we would "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a *reason* of the hope that is in us" (1. Pet. iii. 15). I am sure that one great reason why religion doesn't lay hold of us and work in us and leaven our daily lives more than it does, is because we get into a slipshod way of contenting ourselves with a set of phrases which we take at second or twentieth hand, without ever examining them, or thinking what they mean. And so it comes to pass that religion is often to us not a living reality but a dead form, a thing made up of words and phrases which we don't ever even try to get at the bottom of. I am sure that God means us to use our reason about religion as much as about everything else; and that if we would but do so more freely, then religion would be to us a very different thing from what it often is. It would be not an empty lifeless creed, but a living and life-giving power. And applying this rational method of examination to the subject in hand, it leads us to the conclusion that though all sin is, from its very nature and essence, an offence against God, and therefore undoubtedly deserves punishment, no sin can **DESERVE**, in the natural and *bonâ fide* meaning of the word "deserve", *everlasting* punishment, because there is no proportion whatever between the two. *The only sin, as it seems to me, that could deserve infinite punishment would be infinite sin.* I am sure that as long as sin remains, its guilt and its punishment must remain too. But, after it is repented of heartily and wholly, then to punish it everlastingly, would be out of all proportion to the offence, and therefore would be wholly inconsistent with our conceptions of the nature and character of God, both as a God of justice and as a God of love.

And now let us go on to a second objection. It is said that, if you take away the fear of everlasting punishment, you encourage people to lead wicked lives. You put, so to speak, a positive premium on wickedness. And therefore, that such a doctrine is dangerous and mischievous, and can only be a comfort to the bad. Now if this objection means anything, it means this; that *at present* numbers of people are kept back from committing sins by the fear of everlasting punishment. It means that this awful terror operates upon them so as to bring them to God and to Christ. Now, my friends, ask yourselves fairly whether you *know* of anybody who was ever converted to a saving faith in Christ by the fear of everlasting punishment. Cast a moment's glance back on your own lives, your own personal experiences. Can you remember that such a fear ever kept *you* back from doing wrong? Or did you ever meet with anyone else, on whom you know *as a fact* that this fear ever operated as a restraining or guiding influence? I can most truly say that I never met with such a case myself. I have often heard people say in general terms that all wicked sinners must perish everlastingly. But I never heard any one say *of himself*, that *he* was changed and converted, and taught to love and serve God, through fear of everlasting punishment. I have heard many a time of people who said, or who might truly have said, thus of themselves: "I was once far from God, and despised his love, and lived on madly in ungodliness and hardness of heart. But at last a voice came to me. It had often come before, but I would never listen to it. But it came once more, it came again and again, and at last I listened to it, and it turned me, it melted me, it brought me low on my knees in grief and shame, and yet in faith and love and hope: it brought me to the foot of the Cross, it brought

me to Christ and to God. But what voice was it? It was the voice of love, not of wrath and terror. It was the love of my heavenly Father, the love of my blessed Saviour that constrained me, it was not his anger.”\*

Look again at this objection from another point of view. What value would you put on the love, the dutiful service, of any one to you, if you knew that they only served you because they were afraid of you, and because they knew that the consequence of disobedience would be that you would kill them? Is this the footing you would like to be on with your children, your servants, anybody over whom you had authority? Would you call such a service as that, such a relationship, such a feeling, by the name of love at all? Could there be any love in it? Surely it would be nearer to hatred than to love. It would be a low, cringing, abject, sullen fear, like that which a slave would feel towards his master: not like what a loving child feels, or a faithful willing servant. And do you think that such a service, such a feeling, such a motive for obedience as that, could possibly please, or satisfy, or be acceptable to God? Do you think he would call it love, if we only obeyed him because he could punish and kill us? Is this the service, the love that he asks for, when he calls himself our heavenly Father, and calls us to be his loving children? Surely what God asks for is the free, loving service of a faithful and loving heart. “My son,” he cries, “give me thy heart.” He pours out his love freely upon us, and he asks us to love him because he has so loved us. By all the blessings of his providential care, by all the rich bounties with which he strews our daily path, by all the inestimable love of

\* Bunyan's testimony may fairly be quoted on the other side. But I do not think that it, or any isolated case, could be sufficient to reverse the correctness of the general rule.

our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by all the means of grace and all our hopes of glory, he appeals to our best, our tenderest feelings, and so he wins us over to love him, if we do love him at all.

“ My God, I love thee, not because  
I hope for heaven thereby :  
Nor yet because who love thee not  
Must die eternally.  
Thou, oh ! my Jesus, thou didst me  
Upon thy Cross embrace :  
For me didst bear the nails and spear,  
And manifold disgrace,  
And griefs and torments numberless,  
And sweat of agony :  
Yea, death itself, and all for me,  
Who was thine enemy.  
Then why, oh ! blessed Jesus Christ,  
Should I not love thee well ?  
Not for the hope of winning heaven,  
Nor of escaping hell :  
Not with the hope of gaining aught,  
Not seeking a reward :  
But as thyself hast loved me,  
Oh ! everlasting Lord,  
So would I love thee, dearest Lord,  
And in thy praise would sing ;  
Solely because thou art my God,  
And my eternal King ! ”

Let us now, for the sake of argument, suppose the case of some one, whom the fear of eternal punishment *has* hitherto kept back from sinning. And suppose you succeed in removing that fear from his mind, and he then says : “ Well, if there’s to be no eternal punishment, I don’t care for God any longer ” : and was to go straightway and plunge into all manner of fresh sins : I say that such a man would not only be very wicked, but would be as foolish as he was wicked. For remember that all the arguments against everlasting punishment are arguments at the same time that there *will be*

punishment hereafter, and that that punishment will be exactly in proportion to the amount of a man's sins : few stripes for the lesser sins, many stripes for the greater. And what would you think of the wisdom of a man, to say nothing of his piety, who thought it *worth while* to go on indulging in the pleasure of sin for say fifty years, at the sure cost of undergoing a most severe punishment for say a thousand or a million of years afterwards ?

Observe that my whole argument is founded on this principle, that God, being a God of infinite power and infinite love combined, must have created us, not for destruction but for salvation ; and that having willed this, he can and will accomplish it : that our continued sinfulness makes it necessary for us that we should be often chastised and corrected, not in anger but in love and mercy, in order to work out our reformation and final redemption through Jesus Christ : that if that chastening discipline does not lead us to God and wean us from our sins in this life, then the same discipline, only of a much severer sort, and of a much longer duration, must be continued in the next life : but always and all the time with the same object in view, viz., that of final repentance, and restoration to God and to happiness. And remember also as bearing on this, that being punished doesn't prove that we cannot be pardoned, or even that we are not already pardoned. God may freely forgive us for Christ's sake, our pardon may be already granted and sealed, and yet all the same a heavy punishment on account of our sin may fall on us. David's case is an instance of this : he sinned, he repented, and God sent a message of pardon and peace to him ; but at the very same time he also punished him for the sin. The child, who was the fruit of his sin, was taken from him. Compare also

such texts as these : " To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus " (I. Cor. v. 5) ; and again " But he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire " (I. Cor. iii. 15). And again " He (*i.e.*, God) indeed chastens us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby " (Heb. xii. 10, 11). Well, all I plead for is, that *the same principle*, of punishing with a view to final pardoning, will go on in the next life as well as in this, if, and for as long as, it is needed. And therefore a man would be very foolish and mistaken, according to this view, as well as very unprincipled, who argued that if there was no such thing as eternal punishment, he might and would go on sinning as much as he pleased : because this argument could only really be worth anything as an *inducement to go on sinning*, on the assumption that there would be no future punishment at all, or at any rate none of any consequence. And this, I have tried to show, is very far from being the case.

And now I come to one more difficulty, which I know is in the minds of many. People say ; " If you give up the belief in everlasting punishment, then you must also give up the belief in everlasting happiness : they must stand or fall together, because exactly the same words are applied to both ; and one is put as it were against the other, in direct contrast and opposition." Now it is undoubtedly quite true that the ideas of punishment and happiness are in exact opposition to each other, just as much as light and darkness are : and it is quite true that the same words " eternal " and " everlasting " are applied to both alike. But all that this *proves* is

that both the punishment and the happiness are to last *for a long time*, this being all that the two words "eternal" and "everlasting" really signify, as I have already tried to explain in Sermon II. It is therefore quite true to say that the words "eternal" and "everlasting," as applied alike to future punishment and future happiness, have precisely the same signification; that signification being, that both the punishment and the happiness *will last for a long time*. Further than this limited statement with regard to each, the words in question do not carry us. Whatever else we know or believe about the duration or nature of each, must be derived from other sources. But what then? Does that in any way prevent our believing, *supposing we have other grounds for such belief*, that future punishment *will not last for ever*, and that on the other hand future happiness *will*? Assuredly not. And therefore the objection that the two doctrines, of eternal punishment and eternal happiness, *must stand or fall together, is not correct as far as their endless duration is concerned* (which of course is what is meant by the objection): it is only correct so far as this: that both are spoken of in the Bible *as certain to happen*, and of both it is equally asserted that *they will last a long time*. If you ask, "On what grounds does our belief in *endless happiness* depend?"—I answer: Surely, in the first place, on the intense conviction that we feel, that God must *intend* us to live for ever. And if you ask, "What are the grounds of such a conviction?" I answer, that the whole fact of Creation, of which we are a component part, is a sufficient ground, independently of revelation. For it is, to say the least, highly improbable that God should have planned and carried out the whole vast system of the universe, including not ourselves only, or this planet, but all the millions



of other systems which exist, many of them infinitely larger than our own, if they were all intended to perish utterly, and to be as though they had never been (see Sermon I., page 10).

It is quite true that we are surrounded on all sides by decay and death, as well as by growth and life. Yes, but is not all decay followed up by fresh growth, and all death by new life? Not always the same life reproduced, but always new life—Is not the winter followed by the spring, the harvest by the seed-time? Is not the death of millions of created beings, not only of mankind, but of all animal life, nay, of all vegetable life, followed by the new life of millions and millions more? (See Sermon I., page 11, *Note*). And is it likely, is it conceivable, that man, who is the highest and noblest of all the works of creation, because he is made in God's image, is made to perish, to be annihilated, to be destroyed? I say no! And if not—if he is to live for ever—then I say he must be meant to live, finally at any rate, in happiness and not in torment. I say so, because all that I read in the Bible, all that my own heart tells me, all God's dealings with man from the beginning until now, and above all, his blessed revelation of himself to man through "the man Christ Jesus" (I. Tim. ii. 5): all these things proclaim him to be a loving Father: and being a loving Father, I cannot believe that more than half, or that any, of the souls that he has made, and whom Christ has redeemed, can be left to perish everlastingly. For all these reasons then I believe in the doctrine of everlasting happiness: and *for all and exactly the same reasons* I do not believe in the doctrine of everlasting punishment. And therefore I assert that these two doctrines do not stand or fall together; but rather, *because one* (the happiness) *must stand,*

*therefore on the very same principle, the other (punishment) must fall*; that principle being, THE ETERNAL LOVE OF GOD.

I have endeavoured in the foregoing remarks, to meet some of the difficulties which seem to stand in the way of abandoning the belief in everlasting punishment. How far I have succeeded, it is for you to say. I do not at all expect that everyone will agree or be convinced, neither is it at all necessary that they should. Whether we believe in eternal punishment or not, we believe in eternal happiness and the life everlasting. And we know that the way to reach that is to forsake sin, with the help of God's Spirit sought by earnest prayer, and to put our whole trust in the mercy and love of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: and then we may safely leave the issue in God's hands. But this I do desire to say, and to impress it upon you most earnestly, that whether the view which I have been advocating, of the non-eternity of punishment, be a correct view or not, *it is most essentially and emphatically* A CHRISTIAN VIEW. For so far from its taking away anything from the power and glory and sufficiency of the Gospel message of pardon through Christ, it *immensely increases its power and glory and universality*.

I will state the case both ways. If you believe in eternal punishment, then you must believe, not only that there is a power of evil in God's world which attacks every man, and lures him on to ruin (of this alas! there can be no doubt); but that this power is in the long run a stronger power than the power of good. In fact, to put it in plain language, that the devil is stronger than God and Jesus Christ put together. I don't see how you can escape from this difficulty. You say that God wills that all men should

be saved, that Christ died that all men should be saved, and yet that, after all, the nett result is that the greater part of mankind will be lost and not saved : *i.e.*, that in spite of all that God and Christ have done, and are still doing, for the salvation of man, in spite of all their loving purposes, in spite of all that mighty and glorious scheme of universal salvation, it will be defeated, it will be a failure, for the great mass of mankind. The power of God is great, but the power of the devil is greater : so that, in the end, the devil carries off more sinners to the torments of hell, than God and Christ can win saints to the mansions of heaven. And more than this : when he once gets his victims there, there is no further chance for them : they are his for ever. They may repent, surely they *must* repent some day, but it avails them nothing. After they have played their little part on the stage of this life, the die is cast for ever. For seventy years repentance would have saved them ; but when that bound is past, no amount of repentance, no, not the penitence of millions of ages, can avail them anything. God still lives and loves, Christ still lives and loves, but not them.

And now I pray you to look at the other view :

*The whole difference between the two views really resolves itself into this one question : WHERE ARE WE TO DRAW THE LINE, at which God's love and Christ's love cease ? The other side say, at death : I say, nowhere, nowhen. I believe that such love and such work, being the work and the plan of the All-loving and the Almighty, can never cease : that there cannot possibly be any limit to it, or it could not be what it is, it could not be infinite love and infinite power combined. For how could it be infinite in respect to each man (and if it is not this, of what value or meaning is*

the phrase to each of us?), if it was to stop short in its operation at the first seventy years of our life? For our life does not really stop short at seventy years or so, but is carried on, somewhere or other, through eternity. Surely then, on such an assumption (of forgiveness not reaching beyond the grave), either the love and the will to save, or else the power, *would fall short of the whole life*. And this I for one do not believe. I believe that true repentance *must* come, sooner or later, to every lost wanderer; if not in this world, then in the next: and *that whenever it does come, then forgiveness must come*: then the arms of the loving Father, and the compassionate sympathy of the tender Saviour, will be stretched out, as ever before in this life, to the penitent Prodigal Son. And surely, my friends, this is a far nobler, higher, deeper, and I venture to add, truer view to take of Christ's power and will "TO SAVE TO THE UTTERMOST those who come to God by him" (Hebr. vii. 15): *i.e.*, to save *all* the souls for whom he died, whether they knew him and loved him in their earthly life or not. We say, we make it our glorious boast, that Christ has conquered death and hell. Is it possible then that this very death can have the power after all to cut us off from him? If it has, what is the meaning of St. Paul's words, "death is swallowed up in victory: oh! death, where is thy sting? oh! grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord" (I. Cor. xv. 54-57). Or again, what does Paul mean in Rom. viii. 38, 39, when he declares that "neither *death*, nor life, nor angels, or *principalities* (*i.e.*, the powers of evil: see Ephes. vi. 12), nor things present, nor *things to come*, *can separate us* from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord"? How can there be any real meaning in these words, if death *has* the power to cut a sinner

off from all hope of Christ's salvation, and to hand him over for ever to the principalities and powers of evil ! Oh ! my dear friends, believe me that it is no new doctrine that I am preaching to you ! It is the old, old doctrine, the old message of "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to *all* people" (Luke ii. 10) ; the message of FINAL AND UNIVERSAL SALVATION THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. Put into the scale on one side all the words that seem to shut out hope after death, and then put into the other scale all the words, yea, all the intense and passionate feelings and convictions of the heart, founded on the revelation of God's love and Christ's love to man, which seem to encourage, and to give assurance of, such hope : weigh them together, and see which weighs heaviest. If you weigh them fairly and dispassionately, without fore-gone conclusion or prejudice on either side, I have no doubt of the result. And I am sure of this too, that the more we accustom ourselves to dwell upon the thought of God's love, and the less we dwell on his wrath, the more we shall find ourselves constrained, by all the holiest and deepest feelings of our best nature, to offer up ourselves soul and body, in life and in death, to him who has so loved us and still so loves us, to him "who willeth not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and have everlasting life" (see II. Pet. iii. 9 ; I. Tim. ii. 4).









